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ABSTRACT

This paper addressed: (1) gender equity issues in a major Canadian urban school district; and (2) made gender comparisons relating to seven specific equity measures associated with teachers who were hired from September 1982 to June 1993. The comparisons were made over an 11 year period and included consistency of work, frequency of leaves from work, types of leaves taken from work, assignments to administrative appointments, placement to teach by grade level, acquisition of further degrees, and acceptance of maternity leaves. The personnel records of a cohort of 261 teachers who entered the teaching profession in the school year of 1982-1983 were reviewed. The findings identified several equity issues including interruptions in teaching service, the level of teaching assignment, type of degree(s) teachers held when they were hired, and the incidence of teachers moving into administrative positions. More female teachers took maternity/paternity leaves than male teachers. Female teachers faced major disruption in their careers that male teachers did not face. Four recommendations were presented: (1) equal access for female teachers to administrative positions; (2) equal opportunity for a continuous work record; (3) equity in building seniority; and (4) equity in level of placement. (ML)

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Gender Equity Issues in Education: A Longitudinal Cohort Study

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Gender Equity Issues in Education:
A Longitudinal Cohort Study

Introduction

Future leaders in the educational system will be selected from today's teachers. These future leaders will be charged with the responsibility to eliminate institutional barriers and inequitable policies and practices that presently impede full and fair participation of women in educational institutions; and, hence, in society generally (Shakeshaft, 1993). For this to occur within educational institutions, women as leaders must hold positions of comparable power and thus gain the opportunity to influence others as men presently do. This will likely be accomplished, at least initially, through policy and regulation enactments. In society generally, women will achieve power comparable to that of men through a reconceptualization of effective leadership. Such a process may take several decades.

Within educational institutions, it is no longer acceptable to draw upon past leadership models. Yesterday's leaders cannot meet the needs of today's complex society. Thus, it is important to look within these institutions to assess ongoing policies and procedures which may be contributing to the continuance of the status quo. How are school districts doing in this regard? As stated above, this will take time and is very complex. One of the ways this assessment may begin however, is by looking at gender

leadership issues. The paper addresses gender equity issues in a major Canadian urban school district. The personnel records of a cohort of teachers who entered the teaching profession eleven years before in the school year of 1982 - 1983 were reviewed. Equity experiences of this cohort are documented and analyzed to June 1993.

Purpose

This paper will present gender comparisons relating to seven specific equity measures associated with teachers who were hired in an urban school district from September 1982 to June 1983. The comparisons were made over an eleven year period to June 1993. The seven comparisons are: consistency of work experience, frequency of leaves from work, types of leaves taken from work, assignments to administrative appointments, placement to teach by grade level, acquisition of further degrees, and acceptance of maternity leaves. In addition, the patterns of these measures are compared against each other.

Perspective

Inequality among groups in society occurs for many reasons. Inequality may occur out of individual competitiveness, genetic differences, or the way the capitalist system works, which account for social structural differences (Li, 1990). We take the position that social structural differences primarily create gender inequalities within educational institutions. Thus, gender is a basis for identifying separate social structures with males and

females possessing different knowledge bases (Shakeshaft, 1989). Since males hold more power in society than females (Robertson, 1991), males tend to regard their own experiences and knowledge to be universal and applicable to females. Therefore it is important to address such androcentric thinking and determine salient differences in workplace experiences of males and females and report them. If schools are key to providing leadership in society in eliminating gender inequities, then it is important to focus on possible gender differences within educational systems.

Methodology

Personnel files of 261 teachers hired between September 1982 and June 1983 were pulled and data on the seven measures identified above were gathered. The data for each teacher hired during this period were transferred to a fact sheet. An electronic system file was created using SPSS for Windows and comparisons were made using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Chi-Square procedures.

Data Source

A total of 261 teachers were interviewed and hired during the 1982-83 school year in a major urban school district in Canada. Once hired, a personnel file is maintained for each teacher during her/his career. Out of the total, 250 teacher files were found to be suitable for this analysis, 178 files represented females and 72 represented males.

Central Findings

First, the analysis focused on teachers taking leaves of many types including: maternity, long term disability, exchange, sabbatical, health, education, secondments, family duties, personal, travel, and employment. For the purposes of the statistical calculations leaves were re-grouped into three categories: no leaves taken, maternity leaves, and other leaves. This corresponded with 103 teachers taking no leaves, 65 teachers taking maternity leaves, and 91 teachers taking other leaves.

Is gender a predictor of the total number of leaves each individual teacher takes? The Chi-Square analysis indicated a significant gender effect, $X^2(1, N=250)=16.76$, $p<.001$. Female teachers took more leaves than male teachers ($M_f=1.43$, $M_m=0.67$).

However, sixty-five female teachers took maternity leave compared to 3 male teachers during the 11 year period. Factoring out maternity leaves, the Chi-Square analysis indicated a non-significant gender effect, $p>.05$. Thus, after factoring out maternity leaves from the variable, female teachers took comparable leaves to males, including long term disability, exchange, sabbatical, health, education, secondment, family, travel, and employment leaves. While the sample was considered too small for statistical purposes, it was noted that females took six times the personal leaves that males took.

Do leaves account primarily for the continuity of service teachers have over the eleven year period? This was tested using a multivariate analysis of variance: Is gender a predictor of an interactive effect of leaves (including maternity) and continuity of service over the 11 year period? The multivariate analysis of variance indicated a significant interactive effect of gender on leaves and continuity of service, $F(2,246)=8.81$, $p<.001$. Further investigation using ANOVA indicated that gender contributes more to the overall effect on leaves, $F(1,246)=15.29$, $p<.001$ than on continuity of service, $F(1,246)=5.63$, $p<.05$.

However, the leaves taken included maternity leaves, and when maternity leaves were factored out, the multivariate analysis of variance indicated a non-significant interactive effect of gender on leaves and continuity of service, $p>.05$.

Thus it is concluded that the 65 maternity leaves taken by females and 3 taken by males accounted for the multivariate effect of gender on leaves and continuity of service. Leaves and the associated measure of continuity of service over the 11 year period contributes to the interruption of teaching service which may have an impact upon career advancement of teachers. This may particularly affect the female teachers, who took significantly more maternity leaves compared to male teachers.

Is gender a predictor of career advancement, particularly promotion to administrative positions? Of the

250 teachers hired in 1982-1983, none were promoted to a principalship by June 1993, but 6 were promoted to assistant principalships and one was promoted to the superintendent level within the system.

Administration is considered to include several positions within the school system: curriculum leader, specialist, coordinator, department head, assistant principal, consultant, and superintendent. Is gender a predictor of career path advancement to an administrative position? The Chi-Square analysis indicated a non-significant gender effect, $p>.05$. Thus, the school system did not appear to penalize female teachers from moving into administrative positions for taking more maternity leaves than male teachers.

The study included two other variables that may have impact upon general equity issues within the teaching profession: placement level and type of degree held. Is gender a predictor of the type of degree teachers earn? The Chi-Square analysis indicated a significant gender effect on type of degree $X^2(1,N=250)=22.40$, $p<.001$. Male teachers held more content degrees in conjunction with B.Ed.-After degrees than female teachers, who held more B.Ed. degrees.

In the school district, placement level was grouped into three categories: Division 1 & 2, grades Early Childhood Education to 6; Division 3, grades 7-9; and, Division 4, grades 10-12. Is gender a predictor of the placement level to which they are assigned and subsequently

work? The Chi-Square analysis indicated a significant gender effect on placement level $\underline{X}^2(1,250)=18.61$, $\underline{p}<.001$. More female teachers were placed in Divisions 1 and 2, while more male teachers were placed in Division 4. The placement in Division 3 was approximately equal for male and female teachers.

Analysis of Central Findings

The findings were analyzed into several equity issues including interruptions in teaching service using the indicators of leaves and continuity of service, the level of teaching assignment which was measured in this district by Divisions One through Four, type of degree(s) teachers held when they were hired, and the incidence of teachers moving into administrative positions.

The school district advanced male and female teachers to administrative positions equitably. While 75% of the teachers hired in 1982-83 were females, 77% became administrators by June 1993, and of the 25% of males hired, 23% advanced to administration. This reflects the high level of importance attributed by the office of the Chief Superintendent and the School Trustees to the school district's Status of Women's Committee's Annual Report.

So what equity issues were there, if any, regarding leaves, continuity of service, degrees, and placement level?

Clearly significantly more female teachers took maternity leaves than did male teachers. Those male teachers who did take maternity leaves were absent from work for

shorter periods of time (i.e., three days) than female teachers. The regulations enabling maternity leaves provided that teachers are guaranteed the same teaching position in the same school upon their return. While on maternity leave, female teachers were penalized by losing seniority in the District, a factor affecting many young female teachers starting a family during the present times of budget cutbacks and staff reductions. When teachers requested extensions to their leave, the school district waived its responsibility to return the teacher to the same class and school. Just how many teachers extended their maternity leave was beyond the scope of this study, but it is clear from the data that more female teachers would apply for extension than would males.

It is an equity issue that female teachers commonly face major disruption in their careers which male teachers do not face. Female teachers are frequently forced to choose between maternal and professional needs more than male teachers who do not have to choose between paternal and professional needs as much.

Seniority was related to the issues of leaves and continuity of service. The policy on seniority was that when leaves (other than maternity leaves) were taken, seniority of teachers were reduced to zero, and upon return, teachers built seniority as if they were new to the district. Although the numbers in this study were not sufficient for statistical analysis, six female teachers took personal

leaves compared to one male teacher. If this were a pattern throughout, it would certainly be significant at $p<.05$. As teacher ranks are reduced by seniority during times of budget and staffing cutbacks, leave-taking is an equity issue.

Recall that gender was predictive of the type of degree and of the level of placement in the school district. These two factors indicate equity issues because the school district is perpetuating traditional role models for young women. Young women would see that women became elementary teachers and held generalist Bachelor of Education degrees whilst men became senior high teachers and held content degrees in addition to Bachelor of Education degrees. This traditional role model is one where men hold power and women do not.

Recommendations

The findings of this study contribute to greater understanding of equity issues in teaching in the school system. In addition, the findings inform school principals, system administrators, and policy makers of additional areas in which teachers experience structural inequality in their schools as they consider possibilities available to themselves in the area of school administration.

1. Equal Access of Female Teachers to Administration

It is recommended that the school district continue to provide equal access of female teachers to administrative

positions and to continue to align inequities of career disruptions due to maternity leaves. In addition, the school district is urged to provide sufficient information to female teachers enabling them to make decisions about maternity leaves with security, knowing that taking leaves is supported by the system. As more male teachers choose to blend paternal roles with profession roles, the school district is urged to create a context in which these decisions may be similarly made without possible negative ramifications. It is recommended that the school district monitor gender differences for all types of leaves, especially personal leaves. If significant differences exist, the district is urged to ensure that equity issues are identified and policy is established to alleviate them.

2. Equal Opportunity to have a Continuous Work Record

Continuity of service is an equity issue. The school district is encouraged create policies to create greater equity, such as affordable pension buy-back schemes for teachers who take leaves from teaching for personal and maternity reasons.

3. Equity in Building Seniority

It is recommended that seniority issues are redefined so that teachers taking leave (other than maternity leave) will not have to start building up seniority all over again.

It is also recommended that seniority be counted while female teachers are away on maternity leave.

4. Equity in Level of Placement

It is recommended that the school district actively recruit female teachers with content degrees and B.Ed.-After Degrees to teach in the senior high program.

It is recommended that the school district actively recruit male teachers with general Bachelor of Education degrees to teach in the elementary program.

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